

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A novel approach for transferring management functions between participants generally involves the use of an associate master participant that assumes responsibilities for functions assigned to the master participant if the master participant can no longer 5 perform the functions. A participant in a communications arrangement is designated as the master participant and is responsible for performing one or more functions. Another participant from the communications arrangement is designated as an associate master participant. The associate master participant assumes the role of master participant, i.e., performs the functions previously assigned to master participant, if any of a set of 10 handoff criteria are satisfied. The particular handoff criteria used may vary depending upon the requirements of a particular application and the invention is not limited to any particular handoff criteria. After associate master participant assumes the role of master participant, a new associate master participant may be designated. The approach reduces the amount of time required both to determine that the master participant can no longer 15 perform the functions and to assign responsibility for performing the functions to another participant once that determination is made.